

HOW TO OBTAIN A BUILDING PERMIT~Summary* **BUILDING PERMIT PROCEDURE MANUAL**

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

Department of Planning and Land Use

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The information contained in this Brochure is intended only as a guide. If you have any questions, please contact the Building Division of the Department of Planning and Land Use at one of the numbers listed above.

****This is a summary document only.***

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This procedure manual is intended to help our customers obtain building permits. Sections describing the required steps in the building permit process and required clearances from other agencies are included to assist you in preparing your building plans and other required submittal documents. Our goal in preparing this manual is to make your visits to the Building Division of the Department of Planning and Land Use as efficient as possible.

SUMMARY OF THE BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

There are two basic phases to the building permit process, plan-check and construction inspection. During plan-check, county staff reviews the permit application and building plans for compliance with the building codes. Plan-check must be completed prior to the issuance of a building permit. Construction inspection takes place after a building permit has been issued. A Building Inspector approves each part of the project as it progresses, checking to see that the work is done safely and in accordance with the approved plans and codes. Explaining the plan-check process and assisting you in obtaining a building permit is the main focus of this manual.

Building permits can be processed either as a “minor permit” where structural and zoning reviews of the plans are conducted at the building counter, or as permits requiring “log-in” where the plans are taken in for review. In either case, there is no difference in the requirements for issuance.

MINOR PERMITS

Minor permits can be processed with an “over-the-counter” (OTC) plan-check. For OTC plan-checks, county staff will perform the structural and zoning reviews of the plans at the counter while you wait. If the plans are complete and all requirements have been met, in some cases a minor permit may be issued in a single visit. If, however, an agency outside the County is required to provide their approval, then a return trip to the building counter will be required after their approval is obtained.

LOG-IN PERMITS

After building plans are submitted, the initial plan review time will vary. Check with the counter technician at the time of submittal in order to obtain an approximate time. Subsequent review times will vary as well. The purpose of subsequent reviews is to verify required corrections from earlier reviews have been made. Therefore, to avoid or reduce the number of subsequent plan-checks please be certain to incorporate all of the corrections into the plans.

Minor permits that are likely to receive an “over-the-counter” plan review are:

- Electrical, Plumbing, Mechanical Permits
- Patios; Decks; Swimming Pools; Spas
- Single Story Room Additions less than 500 sq. ft.;
- Patio Enclosures less than 500 sq. ft.
- Residential Garage Conversions less than 500 sq. ft.
- Carports; Retaining Walls; Re-roofs
- Residential Attached or Detached Garages less than 1,000 sq. ft.
- Agricultural Buildings less than 1,000 sq. ft.

CODES AND ORDINANCES

The purpose of the County Building Codes is to provide minimum standards to safeguard life, health, property and the public welfare by regulating the design, construction; quality of materials and use of all buildings and structures in the unincorporated areas. For questions about a particular regulation, please refer to the applicable code or ordinance for more detailed and accurate information.

The County of San Diego currently enforces the 2006 edition of the International Building Code, the 2006 editions of the Uniform Plumbing Code and Uniform Mechanical Code and the 2005 edition of the National Electric Code as adopted in the 2007 California Building Codes (Title 24 of the California Administrative Code). In addition, the County also makes local amendments to the California Building Codes and enforces the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, San Diego County Grading Ordinance, the County Watershed Protection Ordinance and various departmental policies. More information is available at the Department of Planning and Land Use web site: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/>

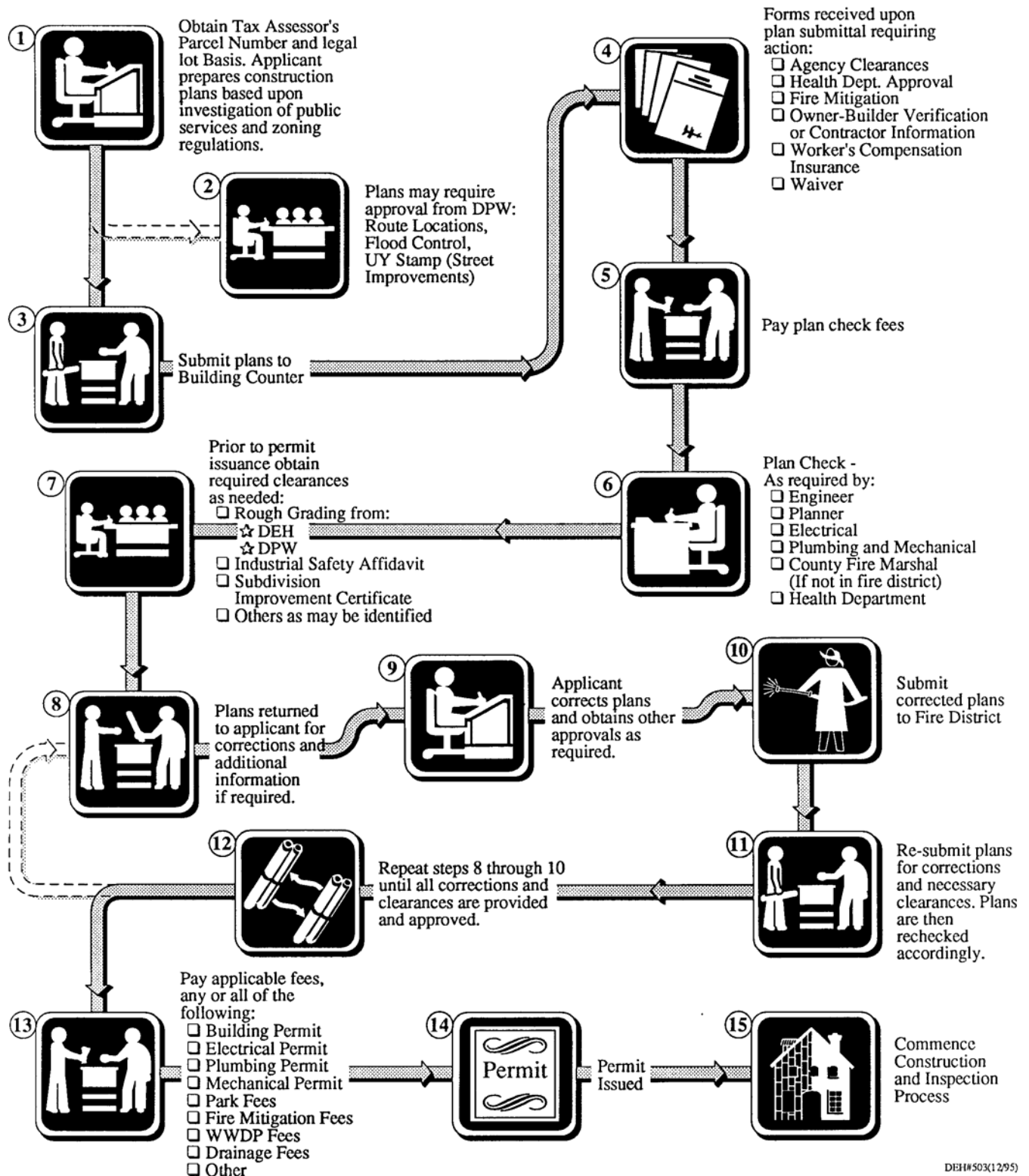
BASIC STEPS IN PERMIT PROCESS

The following steps must be completed before a permit can be issued. We have identified the party responsible for each step in ***bold italics***.

1. Obtain evidence of a legal lot. ***Customer*** (See page 6)
2. Determine zoning and setback requirements. ***Customer*** (See page 7)
3. Prepare building plans, structural calculations and energy calculations and obtain truss drawings (if applicable). ***Customer*** (See page 9)
4. Schedule an appointment for Single Family Dwellings, Tracts, or Commercial, or walk-in for over-the-counter permits. ***Customer*** (See page 8)
5. Commercial projects may require Centerline or Route Locations approval from the Department of Public Works (DPW) prior to plan submittal. ***Customer***
6. Complete application and submit plans to County. ***Both***
7. Receive list of administrative clearances that must be obtained before permit is issued and clearance letters for fire, school, water and sewer agencies. ***Both***
8. Submit grading plan if grading permit is needed. ***Both***
9. Pay plan review fees. ***Customer***
10. Post site cards and call for site inspection if grading permit is not required. ***Customer***
11. Obtain all required administrative clearances from step 7. (This can be done anytime between step 9 and step 21) ***Customer***
12. Plans are reviewed and correction list is prepared. ***County***
13. Customer notified by phone that plans have been reviewed. ***County***
14. Pick up plans and correction lists from County. ***Customer***
15. Correct all noted deficiencies on plans. ***Customer***
16. Reprint corrected plans. ***Customer***
17. Return plans and correction lists to the County for recheck. ***Customer***
18. Repeat steps 12 through 17 (as required) until all corrections are approved. ***Customer***
19. Site inspection or rough grading inspection must be approved before a building permit is issued. ***Customer***
20. Submit corrected plans to the Fire District. ***Customer***
21. Return correction lists and corrected plans, stamped by the Fire District, to the County and submit evidence that all administrative clearances have been obtained. ***Customer***
22. Permit invoice is issued. ***County***
23. Pay permit fees, receive permit and approved plans. ***Customer***

See next page for a flow chart of the permitting process.

DPLU Building Permit Processing Flowchart



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GENERAL INFORMATION

WHEN PERMITS ARE REQUIRED

A building permit is required to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, improve, remove, convert or demolish a building or structure.

Permits are also required for plumbing, electrical and mechanical work.

A permit must be obtained **prior** to construction.

Failure to obtain permits is a violation of County Ordinances.

WHEN PERMITS ARE NOT REQUIRED

(a) A building permit shall not be required for the following:

- (1) Patio covers and carports accessory to R-3 occupancies up to 300 square feet of projected roof area and at least three feet from property line which comply with the requirements of the County Zoning Ordinance including setback from property line requirements.
- (2) Non-habitable recreation and athletic structures and equipment, excluding swimming pools, which comply with the requirements of the County Zoning Ordinance.
- (3) One-story detached accessory buildings including sea cargo containers used as non-habitable space such as tool or storage sheds, playhouse, agricultural buildings and similar uses provided the floor area does not exceed 120 square feet and no plumbing, electrical or mechanical permit is required for the structure. These accessory buildings, however, shall be subject to County Zoning Ordinance requirements and limitations.
- (4) Fences and free standing masonry walls not over 6 feet high which comply with the fencing and landscaping regulations of the County Zoning Ordinance. A building permit shall also not be required for open fences up to eight feet high, where allowed by the County Zoning Ordinance, provided the uppermost two feet consists only of barbed or razor wire and necessary support elements placed at an angle to the vertical for security purposes.
- (5) Oil derricks.
- (6) Moveable cases, counters and partitions not over 5 feet 9 inches high.
- (7) Retaining walls not over three feet in height measured from the top of the footing to the top of the wall unless supporting a surcharge or impounding flammable liquids.
- (8) Water tanks supported directly upon grade if the capacity does not exceed 5,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed two to one, or the capacity does not exceed 10,000 gallons and the ratio of height to diameter or width does not exceed one-half to one. Water tanks shall comply with the requirements of the County Zoning Ordinance for accessory structures.
- (9) Platforms, walks and driveways not more than 30 inches above grade and not over any basement or story below.

- (10) Painting and papering and similar finish work.
 - (11) Temporary motion picture, television and theater stage sets and scenery.
 - (12) Window awnings on Group R or Group 2 occupancies supported by an exterior wall that do not project more than 54 inches from the exterior wall and do not require additional support.
 - (13) Prefabricated swimming pools accessory to a Group R-3 occupancy that are less than 18 inches deep, do not exceed 5,000 gallons and are installed entirely above ground.
 - (14) Single pole television and radio antennas supported on roofs. Dish antennas supported on the ground when they comply with the accessory structure setback regulations of the County Zoning Ordinance.
 - (15) Public utility towers and poles.
 - (16) Any portable metal hanger less than 2,000 square feet in size, located on a County-owned airport used only for parking aircraft and bearing evidence of approval by the California Department of Motor Vehicles for movement on any highway. This structure shall, as an integral part of the basic construction, be equipped with a hitch or coupling device for towing. It shall accommodate, without further major structural change, wheel and axle assemblies which will provide this structure with a safe means of portability. No water, sanitary facilities or electrical installation shall be allowed in this structure and it shall be equipped with permanent ventilation as required for a Group S-2 occupancy.
 - (17) Electric light poles, flag poles and antennas not over 35 feet in height above finished grade when fully extended which comply with the County Zoning Ordinance.
 - (18) Agricultural shade structures where the shade is provided by a fabric or plastic film material,, and agricultural crop protection structures which are constructed with a framework of metal or plastic hoops that are covered with a flexible plastic film, provided that all these structures comply with all requirements of the county Zoning Ordinance.
- (b) Unless otherwise exempted by this code, separate electrical, plumbing and mechanical permits may be required for the above exempted items. It is the responsibility of any person performing the work and any person hiring another person to perform the work to ascertain whether a permit is required from the building official before the work begins.
- (c) An electrical permit shall not be required for the following:
- (1) Minor repair work such as repairing a snap switch, replacing a fuse, repairing a lamp socket or a receptacle.
 - (2) Replacing a lamp or connecting a portable appliance to a permanently installed, suitable receptacle.
 - (3) The installation, alteration or repair of wiring, devices, appliances or equipment for the operation of signals or the transmission of intelligence (not including the control of lighting or appliance circuits) where the wiring, devices, appliances or equipment operate at voltage not exceeding 25 volts between conductors and do not include generating or transforming equipment capable of supplying more than 50 watts of energy.

- (4) The installation, alteration or repair of electric wiring, a device, an appliance or equipment installed by the United States, State of California, a school district, county, city or a "local agency" as defined in California Government Code section 53090, whose facility is exclusively for the production, generation, storage, or transmission of water, wastewater or electrical energy.
 - (5) Repair, installation or removal of any appliance used for household purposes in a residential building. A permit shall be required, however, for connecting such an appliance to the source of electrical energy, unless the connection is made to a permanently installed receptacle.
 - (6) Electrical equipment used for radio or television transmission. However, a permit is required for equipment or wiring for a power supply and the installation of a tower or antenna.
 - (7) The installation of any temporary system required for testing or servicing of electrical equipment and apparatus.
- (d) A plumbing permit shall not be required for the following:
- (1) Installing a replacement water heater when performed by a California licensed plumbing contractor.
 - (2) Installing a toilet, bidet, showerhead or faucet inside a building when the installation is limited to repairing or replacing the fixture and is performed by the building owner or a plumbing contractor licensed by the State of California. The work shall be limited to plumbing on the service side of the fixture's water supply shut-off valve and shall not include work within any floor, ceiling, or wall cavity or include any fixture with a connection to a gas line or electrical service.
 - (3) Stopping a leak in a drain or water, soil, waste or vent pipe. If, however, a concealed trap, drain pipe, water, soil, waste or vent pipe becomes defective and it becomes necessary to remove and replace the defective material, the work shall be considered new work and require a permit and inspection under this chapter.
 - (4) Clearing a stoppage or repairing a leak in a pipe, valve or fixture or removing and reinstalling a water closet, as long as the repairs do not involve or require the replacement of or rearrangement of a valve, pipe or fixture.
- (e) A mechanical permit shall not be required for the following:
- (1) Replacing a faulty control, valve, drier or filter in any heating, ventilation, air conditioning or refrigeration equipment or repairing the equipment, as long as the work does not require removing the equipment from its installed position.
 - (2) Installing a temperature control, repairing a leak or recharging a refrigeration compressor or system.
 - (3) Servicing or repairing an ice machine.
 - (4) Repairing a unit refrigeration system freezer.
 - (5) Repairing any unit-system refrigeration or refrigerated drinking fountain.
 - (6) A portable heating appliance, ventilation equipment, cooling unit or evaporate cooler.

- (7) A closed system of steam, hot or chilled water piping within any heating or cooling equipment regulated by this code.
- (8) A self-contained refrigeration system.
- (9) Replacing any part that does not alter its approval or make it unsafe.
- (f) Exemption from the permit requirements of this chapter shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any work to be done in any manner that violates this chapter or any other County law.

To obtain Zoning Regulations for the above items, call the Department of Planning and Land Use (DPLU), Zoning Counter at (858) 565-5981. Please have your Tax Assessor's Parcel Number available when you call.

LEGAL LOT EVIDENCE

The Department of Planning and Land Use must verify that a parcel of land was legally created prior to issuing a building permit. However, it is the property owners' responsibility to provide evidence of a legal lot. One of the following will be acceptable as evidence of a legal parcel (See DPLU Policy G-3 for additional details):

1. A lot shown on a Final Map. (Major Subdivision Map)
2. A lot or parcel shown on a Record of Survey approved by the Board of Supervisors or the Planning Commission.
3. A parcel shown on a Parcel Map or Certificate of Compliance recorded in lieu of a Parcel Map.
4. A parcel described in a recorded Certificate of Compliance.
5. A parcel shown on an approved Division of Land Plat.
6. A parcel shown on a Lot Legalization Plat. (Used as evidence of legal parcel prior to Certificate of Compliance.)
7. A parcel shown on an approved Boundary Adjustment Plat.
8. A parcel described in a Grant Deed or other bonafide conveyance document recorded prior to **February 1, 1972**. The deed/document does not have to be in the name of the present owner. However, it must describe the perimeter boundaries of the subject property and no other contiguous property. **The legal description and County Recorder's information (date and recording number) must be legible to County staff.** The Deed need not be an original or a certified copy.
9. A parcel that is completely surrounded by lots previously determined to have been legally created.

ZONING REQUIREMENTS

Setbacks

Setbacks are required distances from buildings to property lines. For individual lots, the San Diego County Zoning Ordinance contains minimum setback requirements. Structures generally can not be built within **SETBACKS**. Therefore, it is important to determine the setbacks prior to designing

and locating a proposed structure on a lot. To obtain information on setbacks, contact the DPLU, Zoning Counter at (858) 565-5981 with the **TAX ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER** and one of the counter technicians will assist you.

In addition to zoning setbacks some County roads may have additional, more restrictive, setbacks due to future plans for expansion of road widths or realignment. If a property abuts one of these roads Department of Public Works approval is required prior to submitting the plans. See the item on Route Locations in the Detailed Requirements section of this book for the procedure.

Easements

Inform the Counter Technician of any easements on, or abutting the property in question. To obtain easement information, refer to the legal lot basis or the property deed.

Special Area Regulations

To determine if your property is subject to a Special Area Designation, please contact the Zoning Information Counter at (858) 565-5981. Examples of Special Area Designations include:

- Agricultural Preserve
- Community Design Review
- Fault Displacement
- Sensitive Resource
- Historic/Archaeological Landmark or District
- Specific Historic District
- Planned Development
- Coastal Resource Protection Area
- Scenic Preservation
- Unsewered Area
- Vernal Pool Area
- Flood Channel and Flood Plain

If the subject property is in a FLOOD PLAIN, Department of Public Works (DPW) approval is required before a building permit can be issued. The DPW phone number is (858) 694-3281.

Plans may be submitted prior to obtaining approval for any of the Special Area Regulations listed above. In that case however, a signed waiver of the right to refund plan-check fees will also be required. (A release from the above-mentioned agencies may be required as well before a building permit can be issued.)

WHERE TO SUBMIT PLANS AND OBTAIN PERMITS

Building permits for any type of project may be obtained through our office at 5201 Ruffin Road, Suite B, in San Diego (Kearny Mesa). Our office is open weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

APPOINTMENTS

An appointment is required to submit plans for all projects except minor “over the counter” permits. Appointments can only be made in person once the Building Plan Pre-Submittal Review (BPPR) and DPW review has been completed. Allow at least **one hour** to submit a permit application and plans for plan-check.

TIME SCHEDULES AND DEADLINES

Plan-Check

A plan-check is valid for one calendar year from the date the plans are submitted. Residential and commercial plan check times vary depending upon our workload and the complexity of the project. Grading plan-check times also vary dependent upon workload. The grading plan-check fee is good for as long as the building plan-check is valid, or one calendar year. If the plan-check expires, the plans must be resubmitted and a new plan-check fee paid.

Building Permit

Once a building permit has been obtained, an inspection must be requested every six months and construction progress is required to keep a building permit active. A permit has a maximum duration of three years. An expired building permit may be renewed for a percentage of the current fees; however, the plans may be subject to any new regulations that are in effect at the time of the renewal.

PLAN SUBMISSION

Permit Application

When submitting plans, you will need to complete a Building Permit Application. Fill out the portion that is labeled "Applicant to Complete" on form DPLU: BLDG-291 (the area to the left of the heavy black line). If the owner will construct the project, please write owner/builder on the line requesting a contractor's name. Please read the owner/builder verification form (DPLU #421), if you plan to complete the permit application without a licensed contractor. If a site address has not been assigned, leave the space blank and one will be assigned at submittal. Please check off one of the declaration of Worker's Compensation statements and if required, bring in a copy of the Worker's Compensation Policy. To obtain information regarding contractor's license, call the State of California Contractor's License Board at (800) 321-2752 or visit their web site at <http://www.cslb.ca.gov>.

Building Plans

To apply for a building permit, submit at least two (2) complete non-erasable sets of building plans. See the form titled Minimum Essential Items for Submitting Plans for Single-Family Dwellings and Accessory Structures (DPLU #658) for examples of detailed plan requirements. Also see form DPLU #90 for the plot plan requirements. The plot plan should show at least two (2) off-street parking spaces, which must be located behind the front yard setback. The parking spaces do not have to be covered.

Most homes and residential accessory structures may be designed and drawn by non-professionals. All commercial structures and more complicated homes are required to be designed by a Registered Engineer or Architect who must sign each drawing with his/her stamp and license number. Structural calculations must be stamped and signed by a California Registered Civil Engineer or Architect, including his/her registration or license number.

All building plans must comply with the minimum construction specifications found on form DPLU #81. A copy of Form DPLU #81 should be attached to each set of building plans.

The building plans must also include two (2) sets of truss details when a trussed roof will be used and two (2) sets of energy calculations, if the building is mechanically heated or cooled.

Electrical Information

If an electrical service of more than 200 AMPS is requested, or the proposed building is a

commercial building, your architect or contractor must also submit single line drawings and load calculations.

PERMIT ISSUANCE

When your plans are approved and a building permit is issued, you will receive a stamped copy of the building plans, a copy of the building permit and an inspection record card. These must be kept on the building site and the inspector must have access to these while the structure is under construction.

INSPECTIONS

To request an inspection call any of our offices during normal business hours or use the 24-hour inspection request hotline (800) 351-2551. When calling for an inspection, refer to the COMPUTER GENERATED PERMIT NUMBER and the job site address of your lot. In most areas of the county the DPLU, Building Division requires one working day notice for inspections. We may not be able to provide next day inspections in some of the more remote areas of the county. Please verify with the person taking the inspection request what day the inspector will be out to the site.

PLAN CHANGES

Buildings must be constructed as shown on the plans approved by the DPLU, Building Division. If any changes in the actual project construction are proposed, those changes will need to be reviewed and approved before commencing work. Inspections will be delayed until the plan change process is complete. Potentially costly errors can be avoided if Building Division staff reviews all plan changes **before** construction occurs.

Plan changes will require additional sheets to supplement or replace the sheets and/or details in the original approved plans. Proposed changes must not be drawn directly on the permitted set of plans as no changes can be made to any of the original permitted pages. If an architect or engineer prepared the original submittal, the same design professional must sign and stamp the revised plans. All changes must be reviewed by county staff and need to be initialed and stamped to indicate that the changes have been approved. Copies of the changes will be transmitted to the appropriate field office.

Proposed plan changes that would alter the exterior appearance, use, or footprint of the structure may also require review and approval by a planner at the BPPR Counter.

When submitting changes to the County offices for review please bring the following:

- The approved copy of the construction plans. The approved copy is the one with the perforated date stamps from the County on each sheet of the plans.
- Plan changes must have additional sheets to supplement or replace the sheets in the original approved plans.
- Details or portions of the original plans replaced by the revisions must be removed or clearly deleted. If sheets are removed be sure to bring in the old sheets so that County staff can determine the extent of the changes.
- If an architect or engineer prepared the original submittal, the same professional must sign and stamp the revised plans.
- Two sets of revised sheets or plan sets will be required to complete the process.

- If any replacement calculations or truss drawings are required, both the old and new sets should be provided for plan-check.

If the permit has not been issued; modify the permit application to reflect any changes in description of work or floor area. If the permit has been issued and there is a change in scope of work requiring an additional permit, a new application for the additional work will be required.

Plan change fees will be assessed at the time and materials rate for each discipline that must review the plans.

If the scope of the permit changes or if additional floor area is added, additional plan-check and permit fees, school fees, and/or fire mitigation fees may be due. At that point, any adjustments to your plan records will also be made, necessary clearances will be set, and you will receive instructions on how to proceed. When plan change approvals are complete, you will receive an invoice to pay any required fees and to obtain final validation of the changes to your plans.

FEES

There are two basic components to fees charged by the DPLU Building Division, plan-check fees and permit fees. Most projects will be charged both fees. The amount of each of these fees is determined based on the actual cost of providing plan-check and inspection services. To determine the exact fees for a particular project see the Permit Fee handout (form DPLU # 613).